

If Democrats Controlled the House...

A Weekly Taste of Their Legislative Agenda

September 21, 2012



What sort of legislation might Democrats enact if they control the House? There is little need to speculate—just look at what they are introducing this Congress while in the minority. Below is another example of a bill the Democrats might try to move if given the opportunity.

Proposal: H.R. 6419, the America Votes Act of 2012

Sponsor: Rep. Rick Larsen (D-WA)

Summary: This legislation would require States with voter identification laws to accept signed affidavits (in place of photo identification) for individuals voting in federal elections.

Problems with the Bill: Voter fraud is a [serious issue](#), the threat of which could undermine the very legitimacy of a democratic republic if not combated. Unfortunately this bill would undermine and counteract State efforts to combat voter fraud in federal elections by weakening, if not altogether destroying, the backbone of these efforts.

Forcing States to accept signed affidavits in place of photo identification creates a lower standard for ‘proving’ one’s identity. This becomes evident when one imagines a person intent on fraudulently voting in an election. Realistically, it will be more difficult for this person to do so if photo identification is required than it will be to simply sign an unverified piece of paper promising that they are somebody else. Somebody who is willing to commit a crime by voting illegally (perhaps multiple times under the names of others) is not going to be deterred by having to sign an unverified piece of paper. This legislation presents a lower barrier to illegally altering elections, even in the cases where the States themselves are trying to prevent such an outcome.

It is bad enough for the federal government to ignore or belittle the importance of fraudulent voting where and when it occurs. However it is quite a different matter for the federal government to actively prevent States from pursuing fair elections, and to water down the barriers against fraudulent votes without a State’s consent. This bill would have the effect of preventing States from ensuring the legitimate election of their own Representatives. Ensuring fair and legitimate democratic elections should be a non-partisan and common sense issue, and for that reason this bill is misguided and troubling.

Reminder: RSC staffers and interns are encouraged to send other examples of questionable legislation to Rick.Eberstadt@mail.house.gov.